

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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R 221946Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8139
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 2527

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT SHUM ES
SUBJ: CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY DEVELOPMENTS IN EL SALVADOR

1. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY FORTUNES IN EL SALVADOR HAVE DECLINED SINCE THE TWO PAST PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN WHICH THEIR CANDIDATES EITHER LOST BY NARROW MARGINS OR WERE PREVENTED FROM WINNING THROUGH UNFAIR TACTICS ON THE PART OF GOVERNMENT FORCES FOLLOWED BY POST-ELECTORAL VIOLENCE.

2. WITH THESE TWO DISPUTED DEFEATS BEHIND THEM AND THEIR DEFEATED CANDIDATES OUT OF THE COUNTRY, THE CHRISIIAN DEMOCRATS HAVE BEEN DISMAYED TO SEE THEIR RANK AND FILE DRIFT TOWARD PARTIES FARTHER LEFT IN THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. ACCORDING TO SOME OBSERVERS, THAT DRIFT HAS TAKEN ON THE PROPORTIONS OF A FLOOD.

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3. AT THE TIME OF THE MARCH 12 ELECTIONS FOR CITY MAYORS AND ALL SEATS IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ELECTED TO ABSTAIN. THEIR EXPLANATION WAS THAT CONDITIONS CREATED BY THE GOES RENDERED MEANINGFUL ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION IMPOSSIBLE. THE GOES, IN CONTRAST, ATTRIBUTED CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC ABSTENTION TO THAT PARTY'S UNWILLINGNESS TO SURFACE PUBLICLY THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT HAD LOST CONTROL

OF ITS RANK AND FILE.

4. IN TODAY'S SHARPLY POLARIZED EL SALVADOR, THE LACK OF OPPORTUNITY FOR LEGITIMATE OPPOSITION IS IMPELLING DISSIDENTS INTO THE HANDS OF THE EXTREME AND VIOLENCE-PRONE LEFT. BELATED REALIZATION OF THIS FACT HAS CREATED SOME NEW DISPOSITION TOWARD DIALOGUE ON THE PART OF BOTH THE GOES AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. INTRA-PARTY DEBATE HAS BEEN INTENSE, BUT AS OF NOW THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ARE UNDERSTOOD TO BE ADVISING PRESIDENT ROMERO PERSONALLY OF THEIR READINESS TO RESUME A DIALOGUE WITH HIM AND THE GOES PROVIDED THEY CAN BE GIVEN ANY ASSURANCES THAT THIS WILL BE MEANINGFUL AND NOT MERELY SYMBOLIC FOR PUBLIC SHOW.

5. UPON THIS SCENE HAS JUST ARRIVED A NEW ITALIAN AMBASSADOR, ADRIANO RIGHETTI, HIMSELF A PRESENT OR FORMER OFFICIAL OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY. SOMEWHAT APPALLED AT THE EXTENT OF LOCAL PARTY DISARRAY, HE HAS URGED THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS TO GET MOVING WITH A DAILY, WEEKLY OR MONTHLY NEWSPAPER OF THEIR OWN. IN ALL THREE CASES, THEY HAVE RESPONDED NEGATIVELY, PLEADING LACK OF FUNDS, AND ASKING INSTEAD FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM ROME. AT THE SAME TIME, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ARE NOW ORGANIZING A SMALL TRADE UNION OF THEIR OWN ON WHICH THEY PIN SIZEABLE HOPES FOR SOME RESTORATION OF THEIR STRENGTH IN THE LABOR SECTOR.
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6. THE NEW ITALIAN AMBASSADOR CAN BE EXPECTED TO TAKE AN ACTIVE HAND IN TRYING TO SHORE UP SAGGING PARTY FORTUNES. HE ENDORSES THE CONCEPT OF RENEWED DIALOGUE WITH THE GOES, SEES SOME TYPE OF OPENING TOWARD DEMOCRACY AS ESSENTIAL TO FORESTALL VIOLENT ALTERNATIVES, AND IS IN A GOOD POSITION TO EXERT INFLUENCE WITHIN PARTY COUNCILS.
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